

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJECT: INDEPENDENCE DAY ORATORY NOTABLE FOR ITS MODERATION

1. URUGUAY'S AUGUST 25 INDEPENDENCE DAY WAS MARKED BY A SPATE OF OFFICIAL ORATORY WHICH, THOUGH UNREMARKABLE IN ITSELF, WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER OFFERED AN UNUSUALLY MODERATE OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FUTURE.

2. SENIOR GOU ORATOR WAS HAMLET REYES, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE AND, AS SUCH, URUGUAY'S VICE PRESIDENT. DEMOCRACY, HE SAID, HAD HAD ONLY ONE UNCHANGING MEANING SINCE URUGUAY'S FIRST (1830) CONSITUION, AND THAT "ON THIS ESSENTIALLY DEMOCRATIC TRADITION WE MUST BASE OUR EFFORT TO BUILD A NEW, INVULNERABLE AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY". "WE WILL NOT IMPAIR THE FREE EXERCISE OF CITIZENSHIP BECAUSE OWE FIRMLY SUPPORT THE RULE OF LAW. BUT WITNIN IT WE WILL ERADICATE ANY TOTALITARIAN OR ANARCHISTIC OUTBREAK, BECAUSE THE TERRORISM WHICH THEY ENGENDER IS A DENIAL OF THE RULE OF LAW WHICH LEADS, IN A CLIMATE OF FEAR, TO A TYRANNICAL AUTHORITARIAN STATE." NOTING THAT URUGUAY'S
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TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, AS OLD AS THE REPUBLIC ITSELF, HAD ALWAYS SOUGHT TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF DEMORCRACY AND CIVIC HARMONY, HE CONCLUDED THAT "POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE FREE PLAY OF INSTITUTIONS."

3. ANOTHER MAJOR SPEAKER WAS FONMIN FOLLE MARTINEZ, IN HIS FIRST OUTING OF THIS KIND SINCE TAKING OFFICE. HE PAINTED

A DIGNIFIED PORTRAIT OF AN URUGUAY SEEKING "THE SAME FULL RIGHTS, FREEDOMS AND PREROGATIVES" AS OTHER NATIONS, READY "TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ERRORS BEFORE OUR FRIENDS", BUT INTRANSIGENT WITH THOSE TRYING TO "MAKE US OVER IN THEIR OWN IMAGE." PEACE, HE SAID, WAS SOMETHING "NOT IMPOSED BUT CREATED... AND THERE WE URUGUAYANS ARE NOW SEEKING PEACE AND HARMONY WITH OTHER PEOPLES". AND LATER, "WE ARE OPEN FOR DIALOG BECAUSE WE ARE GOING THROUGH A PROCESS IN WHICH THE PEOPLE AND THE ARMY HAVE JOINED FORCES TO RESOTRE HARMONY WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND WITH OTHER COUNTRIES".

4. THE ARMED FORCES WERE OFFICIALLY REPRESENTED BY COLONEL JUAN ZERPA, WHO COMMANDS A BRIGADE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA, WHERE THE MAJOR INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION TOOK PLACE. ZERPA COMPARED PRESENT TIMES TO URUGUAY'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE: "... THE RECUPERATION OF DEMOCRACY, LIBERTY AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON". THE ARMED FORCES, HE SAID, "CONSCIOUS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY, ARE SEARCHING OUT NEW ROADS LEADING TO THE CREATION OF A NEW DEMOCRATIC STATE WITH APROGRESSIVE TRANSFER OF THE EXERCISE OF POWER TO THE CIVIL SECTOR".

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO LACK OF REFERENCE TO THE MARXIST AND TERRORIST INSPIRED TROUBLES OF THE PAST, THE WORD "SUBVERSION" AND ALL THE TRUCULENCE WHICH USUALLY ACCOMPANIES IT IN URUGUAY WAS LARGELY ABSENT, WHILE THE WORLDS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"DEMOCRACY" AND "LIBERTY" WERE SPRINKLED LIBERALLY THROUGH ALL THE SPEECHES. WE WERE IMPRESSED BY HAMLET REYES' OUTSPOKEN CALL FOR RETURN TO A "LIBERAL DEMOCRACY". THIS PHRASE HAS BECOME THE FARRIGHT'S CODE WORD FOR EVERYTHING THEY DETEST IN A NON-AUTHORITARIAN SOCIETY, AND IT HAS BEEN AN ESPECIAL OBJECT OF PUBLIC CRITICISM BY PRESIDENT MENDEZ. ALSO OF NOTE WERE THE FREQUENT AND EXPLICIT CALLS FOR A RETURN TO POLITICS -- ALBEIT WITHOUT THE VICES OF THE PAST -- AND TO A ROLE FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES. THE WHOLE EXERCISE CAME ACROSS AS A MANIFESTO FOR THE GOU'S MODERATES: ESSENTIALLY NO APOLOGIES FOR WHAT HAD TO BE DONE IN THE PAST, BUT A CONVINCING PLEDGE TO RETURN TO EFFECTIVE CIVIL RULE AND A GREATER, ALTHOUGH STILL STIFF-NECKED, OPENNESS TO INTERNATIONAL DIALOG. THE SCRIPT COULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY ARMY CINC ALVAREZ, AND INDEED MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN. PEZZULLO

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